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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 071248Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3241

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FOLLOWING TEL BOMBAY 0032 DTD 05 JAN 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

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E.O. PINT, IN
SUBJECT: AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: 75 BOMBAY 3237, 75 BOMBAY 3243

1. FINAL RETURNS IN AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WERE A SEVERE JOLT FOR THE JANATA FRONT AND A GREAT SURPRISE FOR THE CONGRESS AS THE FRONT TOOK 54 SEATS AND CONGRESS TOOK 51. THE FRONT MARGIN, CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED, HAS UNDERCUT THE RATHER WIDELY HELD VIEW THAT THE FRONT WOULD CARRY ALL URBAN AREAS IN THE STATE, WITH CONGRESS SUPPORT LARGELY CONFINED TO THE RURAL AREAS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE OUTCOME HAS ALREADY GIVEN NULATION THAT THE CONGRESS WILL SEEK DEFECTIONS FROM THE FRONT IN THE AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION AND HAS STRENGTHENED THE GROWING BELIEF THAT THE CONGRESS WILL SEEK TO UNSEAT THE BABUBHAI PATEL GOVERNMENT AT AN EARLIER TATHER THAN AT A LATER TIME.

2. BOTH THE CONGRESS AND THE FRONT PUT A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT INTO THE CAMPAIGNING. THE CONGRESS FULLY EXPLOITED ITS RECENT SUCCESSES IN THE GUJARAT PANCHAYAT ELCTIONS, WHILE FRONT WORKERS ARE SAID TO
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HAVE BEEN DISPIRITED BY THEIR DEFEAT IN THOSE ELECTIONS. HAD THE

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AHMEDABAD ELECTIONS COME IMMEDIATELY AFTER THOSE IN RAJKOT, BARODA AND SURAT, THE FRONT ALMOST SURELY WOULD HAVE WON MORE DECISIVELY, SINCE IT WOULD HAVE CAPITALIZED ON ITS WINS IN THOSE THREE TOWNS. THUS TIMING APPEARS TO HAVE WORKED IN FAVOR OF THE CONGRESS.

3. THE TEXTILE WORKERS IN AHMEDABAD, MANY OF THEM FROM UTTAR PRADESH AND TRADITIONALLY INFLUENCED BY THE NEHRU FAMILY AND INCLINED TOWARD THE CONGRESS, VOTED IN THIS ELECTION IN FAVOR OF THE CONGRESS. (CONGRESS WON FIVE OF THE SIX LABOR SEATS FROM AHMEDABAD IN THE GUJARAT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN JUNE, 1975.) THE FAILURE OF THE FRONT TO ENTER INTO AN ELECTORAL ALLIANCE WITH THE CPI(M) AS IT DID IN BARODA APPARENTLY HURT THE FRONT IN AHMEDABAD'S LABOR AREAS, AS THE CPI(M) CONTESTED 11 SEATS FROM THESE AREAS AND BY DOING SO CUT INTO THE FRONT'S LABOR SUPPORT.

4. THE MUSLIMS IN AHMEDABAD, UNLIKE THOSE IN RAJKOT, BARODA AND SURAT, WHERE NEARLY HALF OF THE MUSLIM ELECTORATE VOTED FOR THE FRONT, NOT ONLY REJECTED THE FRONT BUT ALSO REJECTED THE MUSLIM LEAGUE WHICH FAILED TO WIN A SINGLE SEAT OUT OF THE 13 IT CONTESTED. THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OF INDIA (WHICH ALMOST COMPLETELY DOMINATES SCHEDULED CASTE POLITICS) IN AHMEDABAD WAS ALSO A BOOST FOR THE CONGRESS.

5. SUMMING UP, INDUSTRIAL LABOR, THE LOWER MIDDLE CLASSES, AND MINORITIES SUPPORTED THE CONGRESS IN RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBERS. THE MARGINAL VOTERS WHO WERE INFLUENCED BY THE PANCHAYAT RESULTS ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE VOTED FOR THE CONGRESS. FINALLY, CONGRESS' SUCCESS IN PROJECTING ITS IMAGE AS THE CHAMPION OF THE WEAKER SECTIONS OF SOCIETY PROBABLY ADDED TO ITS TOTAL.

6. THE CONGRESS (R), WITH ITS 49 SEATS (THERE IS ONE CPI HELD SEAT AND ONE RPI) HAS EMERGED AS THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN THE UMUICIPAL CORPORATIO, FOLLOWED BY CONGRESS (O) WITH 24, JANA SANGH 14, NATIONAL LABOR PARTY WITH 6 (A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN FOLLOWS IN PARA 9). ONE BIG SURPRISE WAS THE FACT THAT THE NATIONAL LABOR PARTY (NLP) AN ADJUNCT OF MAJOOR MAHAJAN (THE REPRESENTATIVE LABOR ORGANIZATION OF AHMEDABAD TEXTILE WORKERS) WON ONLY 6 OF THE 28 SEATS IT CONTESTED
.
WHILE THE NLP HAS TRADITIONALLY ENJOYED THE SUPPORT OF TEXTILE LABOR, IT HAS FAILED TO TRANSLATE THIS INTO VOTES FOR ITS CANDIDATES IN
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ELECTIONS. THIS LED THE LABOR MINISTER OF GUJARAT TO PUBLICLY DEPLORE THE "DUAL LOYALTY" OF THE TEXTILE WORKERS IN AHMEDABAD. WHAT THE MINISTER DID NOT SAY IS THAT UNLESS THIS TREND IS REVERSED--AND WE SEE NO SIGN OR HOPE THAT IT WILL BE--THE FRONT CAN NO LONGER COUNT ON OR EXPECT SUPPORT FROM THE TEXTILE WORKERS IN AHMEDABAD.

7. THE EMERGENCE OF JANA SANGH IN GUJARBW URBAN POLITICS APPEARS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE ELECTIONS, AND THE SUCCESS OF KMLP

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CANDIDATES GIVES THAT GROUP A FURTHER HOLD ON POLITICAL LIFE, TENUOUS THOUGH IT IS. AS IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE, THE FRONT'S ABILITY TO REMAIN IN POWER IN THE AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION DEPENDS ON THE COOPERATION OF THE KMLP. THE TWO KMLP CORPORATORS CAN ACCORDINGLY EXPECT TO COME UNDER SOME PRESSURE TO LEAVE THE FRONT AND JOIN THE CONGRESS IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

8. COMMENT: NO MATTER HOW ONE LOOKS AT THE AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, THEY MUST BE CONSIDERED A SIGNIFICANT WIN FOR THE CONGRESS, SINCE OBSERVERS WERE INCLINED TO CONCEDE THE URBAN AREAS OF GUJARAT TO THE FRONT. THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL, WHICH HAS CARRIED CONSISTENTLY GOOD REPORTING ON GUJARAT OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, CONSIDERS THE RESULTS APPROVAL FOR THE "POST-EMERGENCY SITUATION." WE ARE BEGINNING TO HEAR APPROVAL OF THE EMERGENCY VOICED MORE OFTEN AND WE CAN'T HELP WONDERING IF THE RATIONALIZATION HAS NOT STARTED SERIOUSLY AS PEOPLE BEGIN TO ACCEPT THAT THE SITUATION IS NOT GOING TO CHANGE IN A HURRY. END COMMENT.

9. A BREAKDOWN OF THE SEATS IS AS FOLLOWS:

PARTY	SEATS CONTESTED/SEATS WON
CONGRESS (O)	39/24
JANA SANGH	20/14
NATIONAL LABOR PARTY	28/ 6
SOCIALIST PARTY	7/ 3
BLD	4/ 1
KMLP	3/ 2
INDEPENDENTS	4/ 4
CONGRESS (R)	103/49
CPI	1/ 1
RPI	1/ 1
CPM	11/--
MUSLIM LEAGUE	13/--

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INDPENDENTS	127/--

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